

"Though our oceans are critical to our survival, they are in trouble. On this first day of Congress, we're taking an important first step with Oceans-21 to present a vision for a strong oceans governance policy, based on our better understanding of how our oceans work. This legislation is the kind of action we must take in order to ensure that our oceans will be a vibrant and healthy resource for our grandchildren and their children," said Congressman Farr.

H.R. 21 is the product of a several year effort within the House to draft bipartisan and comprehensive legislation based on recommendations from the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and Pew Oceans Commission reports. First introduced in the 108th Congress to begin a national dialogue on our coasts and oceans, the bill has now been revised based on input from the oceans and fishing communities.

"Our oceans are truly Planet Earth's last frontier, the source of food and other critical resources, the arteries of international commerce and the life's blood of what has been called our big, blue marble," Congressman Allen said. "Oceans-21 seeks to foster better stewardship of these precious resources. It builds upon existing regional initiatives to act as a clearinghouse for federal, state, and local governments to address management needs at an ecosystem scale. Our hope is that regional ocean partnerships which include a fair representation of all affected stakeholders will lead to better, more integrated management that reflects regional goals and priorities, balances the needs of competing industries, and eases coordinated, collaborative response to regional issues."

"Historically, we have not invested in our oceans and Great Lakes in a manner that reflects their importance to our economy and the well-being of our citizens, and their condition is of great concern-the decline of coastal water quality, the decline of fisheries, explosions of harmful invasive species, and other alarming ocean trends are signaling their distress. Oceans-21 is a start for what I believe will be an intelligent and deliberative process to create responsive national oceans policy, and I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Oceans Caucus," said Congressman Gilchrest.

"The federal government must come together to create a coordinated, national approach to ocean policy," said Congressman Saxton, a senior member of the House Natural Resources Committee, and its Fisheries Conservation and Oceans Subcommittee. "The road to developing a national ocean policy should be flexible, bipartisan and goal-oriented. Congress must find a means to address both the conservation and commerce aspects of ocean issues. Oceans-21 is a step in the right direction. In particular, the bill would finally authorize the National Oceanic

and Atmospheric Administration for years to come, and its many efforts to advance good ocean policies."

Specifically, Oceans-21 will:

- \* Establish a comprehensive National Oceans Policy and guiding principles for use and management of U.S. coasts, oceans, and Great Lakes and their resources;
- \* Formally codify the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), strengthening its important mission and functions
- \* Enhance national oceans governance structure, including codifying the Committee on Ocean Policy
- \* Promote ecosystem-based, regional oceans governance, including collaborations among federal, state, and local management entities
- \* Enhance responsible ocean stewardship through education, information collection, and citizen involvement
- \* Establish an Oceans and Great Lakes Conservation Trust Fund to support the purposes and policies of this Act.